

GREAT MEADOWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
MONTHLY NARRATIVE: APRIL 1993

A. HIGHLIGHTS

B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

The Sudbury River flooded early in the month. On the afternoon of April 2 water rose and flooded across Weir Hill Road limiting access for refuge staff and residents. River levels remained very high throughout much of April, attaining a height of 19.87 on April 4. Water Row Rd. which parallels the river for three miles was closed until April 20. Likewise the parking lot and dikes at the Concord unit were inundated for nearly the entire month.

D. PLANNING

6. Other

E. ADMINISTRATION

1. Personnel

3/29-4/2- ROS Frisque and RM Moses attend first session of L.E. Refresher.

4/26,27- ROS Frisque, RM Moses and Bio. Tech Burke travel to MNY to assist with maint. work at MNY and to initiated gull removal program.

4/19-23- Maint. Mech. Sears attends Maintenance Workshop in Patuxent MD.

4/20- Mid year Accomplishment report was submitted.

4/5-9- ORP Kennedy attended annual Law Enforcement training at Patuxent.

4. Volunteer Program

The bluebird monitoring program got underway in April. One new volunteer was added to the bluebird crew this year. Two volunteers came in to assist with the mailing of the Meadows Messenger. Two volunteers assisted with the Wildlife Week Open House, including leading the children's craft activities and making bookstore sales. Two volunteer computer doctors made a house call to the refuge to cure an internal malady in one computer. Our fishtank was maintained, as was the Heard Pond Trail by dedicated

volunteers.

Eagle Scout Candidate Chris Comish and his troop of Boy Scouts completed a trail project at Oxbow NWR on April 23-25. Volunteers Bob Reed and Brian Butler provided interpretive programs on the wildlife, plants and habitat of the area.

6. Safety

F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

2. Wetlands

River floodplains and managed marsh units were inundated for much of April. Water was present into many adjacent forest areas, some bottomland hardwood and some which are traditionally dry in the spring. The forest flooding provided acorns and other mast for woodducks and mallards. These birds could be observed frequenting wooded shorelines for feeding.

Numerous sections of floating cattail mat were deposited on the dikes at the Concord unit. Removal of the mats required nearly a week to complete and resulted in some resurfacing of the affected dike areas.

G. WILDLIFE

2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species

A refuge neighbor observed an osprey near the nesting platform at Rt. 27 & the Wayland golf course in early April. She gave the refuge a photo of the bird.

A mature bald eagle was reported on the refuge by a refuge birding volunteer.

3. Waterfowl

Accurate waterfowl surveys were difficult to obtain in April due to the extensive flooding on the rivers and impoundments. Birds present included, common mergs, ringnecks, woodducks, blacks, and mallards on the impoundments and goldneye, bufflehead, and hooded mergs on the rivers.

4. Marsh and Water Birds

A common loon in breeding plumage was observed on the Sudbury River at Sedge Meadow on April 10.

A great blue heron rookery was observed on the Strand property for the first time in April. This is a newly established colony of

herons with 7 nesting pairs.

7. Other Migratory Birds

Bluebirds were observed in good numbers in early April many having set up territories and protecting nesting boxes. Early warblers were observed as was a yellow bellied sapsucker at the Strand property.

10. Other Resident Species

One river otter was observed in the Strand Pond on 4-6-93. The high river levels and extensive flooding in April has decimated the muskrat population in the river floodplains and in the Concord impoundments. Numerous muskrats have fallen prey to raptors, mammalian predators and the roadways in the vicinity of the refuge.

H. PUBLIC USE

1. General

The Concord Unit remained closed due to flooding until April 27. On April 25 it was opened by Concord Police of their own accord due to complaints from Monsen Road residents of illegal parking outside the gate. The next day Manager Moses contacted the acting Chief of Police to ask him not to take such action again. He explained to the Chief the hazardous condition on the dikes due to displaced mats of vegetation. The unit was reclosed, and when the trail had been made safer, the unit was reopened.

2. Outdoor Classrooms - Students

Six school and scout groups visited the refuge for outdoor classroom activities. Waltham Schools returned for their annual rotation of 3rd grade classes. A total of approximately 263 students attended.

4. Interpretive Foot Trails

Five wayside interpretive exhibits were placed along the Oxbow Trail by the Eagle Scout candidate and his troop. Six more panels were sent to Monomoy for placement on the Morris Island Trail. Nine panels are awaiting placement along the trails at the Concord Unit of Great Meadows.

6. Interpretive Exhibits/Demonstrations

Maintenance Mechanic Sears installed a water spigot and a drain hose in the fish tank room to facilitate the cleaning of the fish tank display. This also had a safety benefit, as the volunteer no longer has to haul buckets of water or extend a lengthy garden hose through the interpretive office.

7. Other Interpretive Programs

Wildlife Week Open House was held on April 18. The theme was "Rainforests - Help Save Their Layers of Life". Featured speaker was SVT Assoc. Director Whitney Beals. Approximately 75 people attended the event.

The Brookline Bird Club sponsored a Children's Walk, led by Refuge Volunteer Sabrina Hepburn, age 13, on April 24. Since the parking lot was closed and the Dike Trail was not readily usable, the group accessed the Refuge from the old railroad bed.

11. Wildlife Observation

17. Law Enforcement

18. Cooperating Associations

At Great Meadows, gross sales were \$67.65. Art Show fees were \$100. Gross sales for Monomoy for the period of Feb. - April were \$135.97.

ORP Kennedy met with the SuAsCo Board on April 1. The board approved making a donation for interpretive labels for the displays at Monomoy NWR. This is the first major donation the Cooperating Association has been able to make, thanks to a significant increase in sales at Great Meadows and the opening of the outlet at Monomoy.

I. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

8. Other

Work on the Concord restrooms continued through April. Contractor Guarente replaced the handicapped toilet in the mens room, however the unit was placed to close to the wall requiring removal and installation at the appropriate distance.

The radiator on the John Deere tractor was repaired after a leak was noticed while repairing the entrance road to the hdqts bldg.

Repairs to all the river informational signs were completed in April.

The station GMC dump truck was repaired and repainted in April. The cost of the work was split between Stewart B. McKinney NWR and Great Meadows. The station intends to swap our dump truck for the larger Mack dump truck at PKR refuge in May.

A woodburning stove and coal/wood cooking stove were retrieved from the John Hay NWR in April prior to renovation of the gatehouse.

Informational signs were routed and installed on the refuge entrance gates asking visitors to park in designated areas and not block the gates.

Initial work to remove floating cattail mats which were deposited

on the Concord dikes in early April was begun during the last week of the month. Removal and other repairs to the dike will be required well into June.